DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 120 451 CE 006 720

AUTHOR Wernick, Walter
TITLE Career Development through Life-Centered Education.
PUB DATE 9 Mar 76
NOTE 9p.; Speech presented at the Comprehensive Illinois Occupational Education Demonstration Center (Joliet, Illinois, March 9, 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Career Education; Community Cooperation; Educational Accountability; *Educational Philosophy; *Individualism; Models; *Social Responsibility; *Social Values; Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Influence; Teacher Orientation; Teacher Responsibility

ABSTRACT

Schooling can be a terrible social disease, if it generates grasping, self-centered individuals seeking freedom from responsibility rather than life-centered human beings seeking freedom for responsibility. Career education can focus on individuals, but help them see themselves as characters in a larger play on the world's stage. Others may have developed their conceptions of career education as the speaker did, challenged from what they wished to perceive to thinking along a new line in a wider territory, because the career education movement is a process to enlarge the human experience. Schools, too, are thinking through the ideas of personal independence and communal interdependence. Career education, a reform movement, has to involve teachers; reaching for the total human community requires the help of all. Educators must perceive the school as an agent to involve the students in their futures, and ours. Career development programs require the soul-force of Buber's I-Thou relationship; without it, individualism will bring anarchy and competitive strife. Perceiving energies available for connecting and binding individuals brings a different perception of the educator's mission. Teachers must infuse their environments with life, real, credible, imaginative, and empathic, by bringing creative and original responses to the interactive situation's needs.
(Author/AJ)

**********
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
**********

ED120451

# CAREER DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LIFE-CENTERED EDUCATION

Address By

Dr. Walter Wernick
Professor of Education
Northern Illinois University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

To Participants Attending
The Comprehensive Illinois
Occupational Education Demonstration Center
at Joliet, Illinois
March 9, 1976

I'm happy to share the joys of this occasion with you. I know many people worked very hard to provide this opportunity for us to get together. The next few days should result in many new ideas for all of us.

I've tried to put together a few new ideas in this talk tonight, but before I share them with you I'd like to take a moment to explain how I arrived at them.

This is March of 1976 so at first I thought I'd use a bicentennial theme. I believed I could develop the idea of career development as making your way in the world, as a search for freedom, for the pursuit of happiness.

I remembered how professional educational workers have strived to build independence, to help students find out information for themselves, to clarify their own values, to make their own decisions, and to move toward the truths as they saw them. I remembered how teachers arranged learning environments so students could build positive self-images, so they could become curious about new experiences, so they could ask about the complexities and the wonders about them, and investigate them to their hearts' content.

I remembered how teachers danced about the shaping of the self, ever concerned that a student develop self-confidence, that a student develop integrity, an individual identity, and personal meaning.

The thoughts came thick and fast, all credible, all tinged with the sweat of hard work, for I knew how difficult it was to work with the inner world of feelings, and to help a student make it through the sufferings of his learnings. A fife and drum were weaving American rhythms through my thoughts. I was developing a strong yearning for mom's apple pie.

I thought of the many activities I had seen to encourage and extend interests, to develop motivation, to increase personal productivity. I remembered the apathy which greeted some teachers as they began their work and the sparks which were generated because of the endeavors of the teachers. I saw kids getting turned on to their own lives, and I knew that working teachers, focusing upon the personhood of their learners, could initiate and facilitate that mysteriously unique process, the development of individual human beings.

CE008720

In my imagination I could see amber waves of grain, the Statue of Liberty, and the American astronauts landing on the moon.

While I was engaged in preparing my ideas for this occasion, to the tune of Yankee Doodle Dandy, of course, my wife took me out to dinner and I heard a talk by a recent traveler tc the Orient. Amidst the social amenities of a pot-luck, fund-raising dinner for the League of Women Voters, my musical background stopped and the convolutions of my grey matter twisted into another turn.

Suddenly, I was awakened to what mainland China was engineering within its educational system -- for over 900 million people. Chairman Mao says there is no education without productive labor, and what he says is what goes on. He says, "Serve the People," and that is what the schools are engaged in doing.

Is there anything as menacing as a single thought surrounded by silence? Boy, was my mind in trouble!

Education in China is valuable, only if it is deemed socially significant. The individual is taught to work for the revolution, to work for the State. Each student is taught to be a part of the whole and to submerge his individual interests to the larger unity of his community.

Well, 200 years of the United States of America still seems a long time to me, and I thought of all the great benefits of mom's apple pie and being first on the moon; but then I wondered whether my thoughts about the individual's pursuit of happiness on this communal spaceship we call planet Earth were deep and wide enough to carry us along for another 200 years. Was career education teaching people "to do their own thing?"

I remembered a reading, from Gandhi I think, "Civilization in the real sense of the term consists, not in the multiplications, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service."

That seemed to have good vibrations with what contemporary environmentalists are explaining to us. I found myself thinking: "The wise use of our resources must be planned. Every individual cannot be allowed to do whatever he wishes with everything he comes into contact with. Our air, our water, our soil -- even our human resources -- are being exploited, polluted, destroyed, and discarded. Could the cause be traced to personal aggrandizement and greed?" Does career education promote selfishness?

So I looked again at this bicentennial theme of personal freedom. In the silence of my thoughts, I decided it was obscene to stimulate a person to usurp his environment, even his own. I decided not to listen to Frank Sinatra sing MY WAY any more. When I could I'd play Barbra Streisand's PEOPLE over and over again.

I decided -- as many of the sages who have written and spoken about the development of our human enterprise before me earlier decided -- I decided that our chief energy must be concentrated upon achieving reform from within.

Well, that kind of turned me about, inside out to be exact. Now I had a sickening feeling that schooling could be a terrible social disease, that it could be generating grasping, self-centered individuals, individuals who would be seeking freedom from responsibilities, rather than life-centered human beings, caring human beings who would be seeking freedom for responsibilities, for working for the whole.

I was touched by the idea that outer freedom is never more than the expression of inner freedom already obtained, and I turned my thoughts about. I wondered if teachers were doing the right thing.

I thought again of the new accent of Career Education, of the places I have visited, and I found my mind's eye broadening. Yes, it was true I had seen an emphasis upon each individual, but when I looked earlier, I had missed the larger social scene. I had forgotten the sharing of ideas, the end products which were displayed and appreciated because they contributed to the learning of all. I had overlooked the work done by teachers to guide students in their moral and spiritual development. Career education could focus on the individual and his path, but it could also help a person enlarge his lifescript. Yes, it was possible for an individual to see himself as a character in a larger play on the world's stage.

It was my own predetermined focus which had earlier narrowed my perceptions. They were keen, but they were dry and devoid of background. As William Blake said almost 200 years ago, I saw through my eye, not with it. Forcefully, I worked to enlarge my own field of vision. When I had refocused my perceptions to include more of the moist, glistening work of career educators, I found a larger image of career education, an image which was both personally meaningful and socially significant. This image is more satisfying. When I hold this image to the light I get more sparkles, more facts, more interesting and valuable ideas, much more of the human experience.

Why have I started by treating myself as an object?

Why have I deliberately made conscious and verbal what might otherwise have been just a passing phenomenon? Just a personal note...

Do you see the connection to the career development process?

Maybe some of you arrived at your picture of career development the same way. Did you start with what you wanted to perceive? Then suddenly, you were challenged by a new force and you found yourself thinking along a new line. Did your lines of thought converge in new territory, territory that you didn't plan to deal with because you weren't sure you could manage it?

Did you become startled that you didn't perceive the whole to begin with? Did you wonder that your thinking was too small and narrow, that it might get you into more trouble than you wanted to deal with? Remember how you felt when all of a sudden your thinking experiences carried you into that brand new uncertain arena? Scary, wasn't it?

But look, didn't you develop some new self-confidence because you proved to yourself that you could learn something new? Didn't your refocusing of the content of your experience result in a new and fuller integration of ideas?

Have you been following these thoughts with me? If you have been empathizing with me, then you probably have realized the thought which I have been attempting to have you discover for yourself: the career education movement is a process. Career education is a process to enlarge the human experience.

What I described briefly about the process of my thinking through the ideas of personal independence and communal interdependence is what our schools are doing, too.

Career education is as much a process as it is a kaleidoscope of identifiable products. Career education is a process of refocusing our energies. It's a reform movement, not a remedial movement, not a catch-up for failures or for minority segments of our population only. Career education is a process of seeking, involvement, and selection -- of committment and action.

We've had thoughtful challenges and thoughtful responses to our educational system before, but this time our refocusing and reforming must include newer and larger dimensions of thought.

This time we can't serve the people by renaming subject matter "disciplines of knowledge" and running them through the theoretical abstractions and certification procedures of university professors.

This time we can't serve the people by reworking the norms of our standardized tests and then proclaiming new standards of excellence based upon numbers rather than performance.

This time we can't serve the people by training armies of teachers to follow idiot-proof teacher's guides and highly polished scope and sequence charts.

And we certainly can't serve the people by throwing everybody into large, empty rooms and proclaiming that somehow differentiated teams of teachers will magically coalesce to deliver a product called "open education."

This time the mosaic we see in our mind's kaleidoscope has to include teachers as key creative agents in the refocusing process. Those who are to deliver planning and coping skills cannot merely reshuffle existing content within existing frames. Our teachers will have to be involved in the movement to widen our horizons. Our teachers will have to be involved in collaborative endeavors with new agencies and new personnel. What our teachers do will be a model for everything else!

The new orientation must be targeted carefully because our bull's eye lies within, within a person's imagination of what he may become, and what may become of all of us. The use of resources to bring energies to this orientation must be broadened. There are some appropriate resources within the schools, but not enough for the work to be done. Reaching the individual and reaching for the total human community will require the help of all of us. We know that schools cannot be totally responsible for all of education, but professional educational workers within the school must perceive the school as an agent to involve students in their futures -- and ours. Professional educational workers must

see an active life-time-space continuum within each student he meets. Teachers must work to establish an empathic bond which goes beyond the immediacy of the classroom situation and the management of materials and groups, which, in short, goes beyond the need to sense and seize the Now.

Becoming is the theme of career development, and there can be no career education if there is no deliberate attempt to work at the process of career development within individuals. This process of becoming is not for oneself only. Becoming is part of the process by which one participates in the forming of the total human experience.

Martin Buber came close to this concept when he suggested an I-Thou relationship as a means of living. Career development programs desperately need this soul-force.

The work of our teachers to personalize and individualize, to establish options, to imagine alternatives, to open new vistas for personal growth and development of interests, abilities, and talents -- all this diligent planning and intelligent implementation must be perceived in this soul-force context. If we leave out this dimension from our kaleidoscope, our picture will be so highly individualistic that we will see anarchy in short order; and it will be so full of competitive strife that our less talented, our poor, and our less assertive human beings will be doomed to survival-level prisons wherein they will be exhorted to be productive for the common good.

And you know, as well as I do, that the common good in America is defined and managed by those who control the power and make the policies which we are obligated to follow, if we wish to follow the law. No wonder we see so many of our unsettled Americans long for the benevolent dictator to make things right, to change the situation so that the picture is static, so that we can feel comfortable that everything is in its proper place, and everyone knows his proper station.

Ah, how much easier it might be if all I had to do would be an assistant to the teacher's guide. How much easier it would be to present objective subject matter and then evaluate the repetition of the stuff in spitback examinations. How much easier it would be if I didn't have to think through the continuum of each of my student's experiences. If I only didn't have to think of what's to become of all of us!

That soul-force is a dangerous ingredient. Once I perceive the energies that could be used to connect and bind individuals to each other and to the total human experience, I perceive a different mission for my work -- and different relationships with others who are intrinsic elements of my human community.

Some see the same open spaces I do and they want the distances between elements to become greater. I see breaks between our human experiences and want them to be healed. I want the separate pieces of our totality to be brought together.

John Dewey once said that what the best and wisest parent wants for his children, the community should demand for all its children. I like that idea. In my refocusing of the elements of the educational system, the support systems, the networks, the resource utilization formulas, and so forth, I see the spaces in between -- the connecting links, if you will -- I see the total experiential

background to be more important than any of its parts.

Isolation is wasteful. Involvement breeds life.

I've seen too many of the results of our system where the delivery system's main concern was training the parts. These part-ly finished results are often ill at ease in the human condition. These part-ly finished results are often alienated from the human experience, their own as well as the experiencing of others.

The product of our work is people. If the results of our work are just functioning parts, if these separate individuals do not perceive their energies as attached to a living whole, what kind of human beings have we produced? Our product is people. Can we shape their soul-force?

A 4th century philosopher put it well when he wrote:

> If a person is without a teacher or precepts, then if he is intelligent, he will certainly become a robber; if he is brave, he will certainly become a murderer; if he has ability he will certainly cause disorder; if he is an investigator he will certainly become bizarre; If he has a teacher and precepts, then if he is intelligent, he will quickly become learned; if he is brave, he will quickly become awe-inspiring; if he has ability, he will quickly become perfect; if he is an investigator, he will quickly arrive at all truth. Therefore the possession of a teacher and of precepts is the greatest treasure a person can have; the lack of a teacher and of precepts is the greatest calamity a person can have.

And that's of Chinese origin, too!

Career education has to mean more than the teaching of saleable skills, more than the gathering of occupational information, more than learning the skills of value clarification and practicing the processes of decision-making. Career education-teachers have to make a committment to our ultimate career -- the furtherance of life. They have to see their individual, striving learners, their logically organized subject matters, their (multi-sensory) media programs, and so forth as parts of a larger whole.

Career education teachers have to infuse their teaching environments with life -- real life by making content relevant to the activities of believeable adults in their communities, credible life by connecting students and their work to authentic adults and the work they do, imaginative life by encouraging students to study their own intrapsychic indwellings to find out who they are and what they have within themselves as potentialites, and empathic life by arranging and sharing frequent experiencing of commitment and their consequences in terms of effects upon the human community.

The guiding principle has to "from life to life." Life above all.

Many teachers see themselves as models of the life-force. Although they're modest in their planning, and hopeful that their learning environments will not be structured only around the teacher's own ego needs, they are fully aware they will find themselves within many teachable moments. Prepared to be a human being while a teacher, the strengths of these life-force teachers are kindled

by their creative and original responses to the needs of the interactive situation. Their characters glow and emanate with the heat of the action. They warm themselves -- and others -- by being actively engaged in the humanizing process.

These teachers are aware they are participating in the shaping of the human experience. They eagerly look for signs of developing life, and respond to it deliberately. They are not afraid to share with their whole being, what they feel, what they did, or what they think they might do.

You and I know when we are that kind of teacher -- and you and I know when we are not.

We all know when we do not wish to enter our personal selves into the instructional arena. Then, we are aware of the development of the life-force, but we do not bring our presence to it not all the time. Sometimes, we use artistic dimensions, novels, plays, poetry, operas, and so forth to evoke feelings and thoughts. Sometimes we do nothing to enlarge the human experience.

Sometimes our deliberate unwillingness to put ourselves in the arena is due to our belief that we must be objective, that our own personal values must not be foisted upon the young. And that is true, to a great extent, it is very important for us to use caution.

Caution, yes. But a full stop? No! We must learn not to give up our presence.

We must become alive subjects ourselves, especially in this industrialized, technological world wherein our youth move readily into I-it relationships, and where their thing values are reinforced by the materialistic values of our economy.

Caution, yes, but life above all. Our intuition and our professional conscience can lead us to what is right.

Ask yourself, "What matters profoundly in the development of I-Thou relationships?"

Whoever has examined the careers available to the human species has come to the same conclusion: there is no substitute for the presence of an active human being.

If we start with the basic questions of life we can see the connectedness of all the elements. I admit it might involve work, and a lot of refocusing. However, my active involvement with my kaleidoscope tells me that the career education movement can help us ask basic questions. It can help us refocus our energies to perceive the human community as a oneness.

That's my work with my process. Where is your process leading you?

Sure, we could pattern career education after an engineering model if we chose. You know that one. The questions are related to what goes in and what comes out. You measure and you count. That's how you determine accountability in that model. There always seems to be demand for that kind of demeaning evaluation of our work.

Or we could get a master plan of abstractions from one of our ivory tower theoreticians. You know how neat and logical all the concepts would be in that one. All you would have to do is touch all the buttons and the computer will deduce how ready you are to take on the world, in a rational way, of course.

Please note that I'm not trying to destroy these models. I am a certified collection of facts, skills, and concepts. I'm a product of schooling -- as you are, too. But they have their place in another dimension than the one we are addressing tonight. Career development is life-centered education. Nothing else will do!

-- if I could suggest a model for the career education movement, I would propose that we consider the empty places surrounding the elements of our human experience. I would want people to believe that what is significant is invisible to the eye.

In my Model Program I would stress involvement, connectedness, unification, mutuality, harmony, togetherness, and the sharing of separate and isolated resources within the total human experience.

I have seen, and you have, too, professional educational workers connecting the spaces between the students and their parents, between students and their peers, between school subjects and the activities of adults in their communities, between schooling and work, and between educational systems and the lifeblood of our civilization.

Working teachers know the spaces as opportuntities for involvement; working teachers know how they can make their presence felt.

Please note that I am not praising the separate and isolated elements for having achieved crystallization and alienation from the whole. We do not need further industrialization of our human beings. We do not need more insulation for the parts.

To me, career education is an opportunity to refocus several of the beautifully fashioned pieces -- and the ugly pieces if we can -- into a larger whole; a larger whole, as the expression goes, as big as life itself.

Let me toast this opportunity, in a toast that comes from a heritage dating back over 5,000 years. For our young America's bicentennial, for the nine hundred and twenty million Chinese, for Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand, and for all the human beings with different backgrounds, different talents, different resources, but with one authentic, basic developmental career -- the human experience. L'Chayim, To Life!

May we have a joyful and profound experience in learning how to develop career education programs -- and in learning how to further the development of life.